

This Old House

The Newton Project

Get a sneak peek at the new season's first house

All about fire pits

Window cleaning tips

Tour our Idea House

Install a USB outlet

Lay a bluestone path



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THE HARDEST-WORKING ROOM IN THE HOUSE



We asked interior designer Denise Enright to tell us about the highly efficient, "all-purpose" entry laundry/mudroom in the **TOP 2017 Idea House, the Beach House at East Natick, Rhode Island**. Here are some of the thoughtful design decisions that resulted in its multifaceted and inviting space.

COME ON IN!

This space has many roles, encompassing a laundry room, a mudroom, and a part-waiting station. The goal for this highly-traffic area was to make it as welcoming as it is functional. Clean, neutral walls allow for fun with fabric patterns. There's a drop zone and cubbies to organize belongings. Dark brown black slate flooring can withstand heavy traffic. Generous windows allow the play of natural light and offer a sweeping view of the heart yard. And there's direct access to the game room, so parents can enter without bypassing through the main floor of the house.

WASH AND GO

As this home was designed for families who entertain frequent visitors, we selected laundry appliances that were hard and are built to last. Second-Quint's clothes washer and

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PETS WELCOME

The dog-washing station with pebble mosaic tiling is every pet owner's dream, providing a place for dogs to "wipe their paws" before entering the main house. And we've built in plenty of storage for pet food and accessories.

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SOUTHERN GOTHIC

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on the cover



PHOTO BY JEFFREY MCKEE/STYLING: KATHLEEN MCNAUL

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Letter FROM TOH

I can see clearly now...

For more than 18 years I lived in my former house. October a few months ago things got worse—the return of cold, crisp winter and it was time to wash the windows. This was no easy task.

It all began back in 1991 when I read "Make That Glass Sparkle" in Deborah Johnson's excellent piece about best window-washing practices on page 16. There the bright sunlight streaming through clean windows out my 19th-century Massachusetts townhouse had front and back windows on four stories. There was no water access to the front, which was on the man-made walls of those windows. Early on, I hired a company that came with a telescoping ladder and did them all. It cost an arm and a leg, and I didn't do it again.

The back windows were another story. Twenty-five feet-tall-deep! I would reach the ground—and lost those windows. From the third-floor deck, I could tackle floors three and four.

I once tried to wash the second-floor windows by hand from an extended ladder. (One was enough.) There I discovered a utility product called Wonder Window Glass & Frame Cleaner, which saved me the garden hose to both wash and rinse the windows.

The problem, as noted, was that the first deep backwash Windows were, no problem. Windows two, three, four, etc., were another story. I would reach the top, position myself, then use no soap to wash the remaining windows without being spray-painted in the face by the window. Eventually I learned how to fit for this task that included a pair of goggles and avoid using soap/water on a head. Every single time, by the time I finished, I looked like Frosty the Snowman. Only no hat.

After I came inside and towed off 10 loads of the water—well the windows plus both sides of the four sets of French doors with 30 or 45 shields (lightbulbs) it took a whole day and my arms hurt forever.

The house I live in now has two stories and no French doors. The owners replaced the old windows with new that tilt and turn every clearing on both sides. I love them.



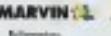
My window washing
helper took his cue from
Frosty the Snowman. He'd do the
job I did before he grew his
white-and-puffy beard.

KAREN MYLANT,
REGGIE IN CHIEF,
reggie@thisoldhouse.com

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Reader mail OCT 2017



TALES OF HOUSES LOVED and houses lost flooded in following our July/August issue. Many letters also included stories about how projects, renovations, and repairs brought together the people who lived in these houses—who turned them into homes.

Old-house dreams

Elated reading Sanna Wylund's "The One That Got Away" [Letters from TDS] (July/August 2017), I left my historic home of 20 years for a newer one in Raleigh, NC, and I've had dreams about it ever since. Two years later, we've bought a second home that's a real fixer-upper that "old-house experts" I talk to raved about. But like Sanna, I still never forgot my first love.

—JOHNNY HATTON, RALEIGH, NC

Thank you for the editor's letter in the July/August issue. My "new" hot got away—"my childhood home." Your letter was a wake-up call, and the new owners hadn't taken care of it. Some resources have to look back home forward—and the new place can do the same by inviting my 1851 home back.

—ODI LATHAM, TRAIL, BC

The littlest apprentice

My 6-year-old son, Bennett, aspires to be a "fix-it old-house guy," so he uses his imagination to show him the ropes. Together they built a shelf. Thank you for the great work you do! My little playware helps to keep your letters company.

—CLARE O'DONNELL, MA

How to reach us

E-mail the editors at TDS_letters@hewitthouse.com or write to:
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• Include your full name, address and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.



Tinley gift idea

—MARILYN KINSON, TINLEY PARK, IL



My mother fell in love with the end-grain cutting board in a recent issue [Stained, May 2017], so I just had to make it for Mother's Day. I used salvaged wood from my 99-year-old house. Thanks so much for the idea and the easy-to-follow instructions!

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home solutions

INSIDE | LEAF RELIEF | RENO TIPS | SMARTER OUTLETS | STICK-ON STYLE | MORE

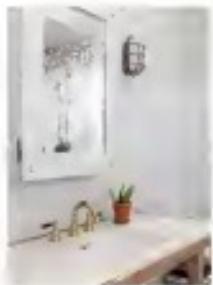


Carve out an avian rest stop

This whimsical feeder is a sure way to attract winged visitors while also brightening your view from inside. To make one, select a coconut shell and a traffic-stopping yellow rice straw (bread bowl) will suffice. Cut a good-size opening in the shell, along with holes for sturdy eyes (big feet), and a coarser twine (using a serrated sawtooth) for a sharp blade, protecting your other hand with a work glove. Scrape out the soft flesh, and then, the shell will firm up. (It won't fully harden—so let it sit long—as a snow globe.) Use silicone glue to affix the base to a wooden block or a rock, and then add a wire hanger to the back. Fill with birdseed. Thread the twine through to hang on a sturdy spot, and your feeder is ready to fly.



PHOTO: NANCY JONES



You found the rake—now do the right thing

Life was easy when you could pile up leaves and let kids romp in them until the pile was no longer your problem—or enjoy the aroma of a traditional Halloween bonfire. Today there are rules, not to mention neighbors who wish you'd keep your leaves on your side of the street. Read on for our leaf-disposal dos and don'ts.

WHEN IN DOUBT, MULCH

"The most environmentally conscious thing you can do is leave the leaves on your lawn," says Kurt Marolf, of the New York Botanical Garden. Leaves when left to decay in the street will release phosphorus, which can find its way into storm drains and waterways—but be sure to shred them finely with a mulching mower and lay them over the lawn. Or take clippings under shrubs and onto flower and vegetable beds instead.

OR COMPOST THEM

Decomposing leaves also generate nitrogen, which helps open field scrapes like "black gold"—good for the gardener and for the compost collector. In a moist pile, keep the critical dry-to-leaves-to-greenings at about 2 to 1. Spread the leaves on top so they can soak up the moisture needed to decompose and help keep air in the soil. Turn over frequently to encourage pests. Or just compost the leaves since all over there frosty pile is a great home for earthworms.

CURB-SIDE COLLECTION

Many towns pick up piles of leaves for curbside collection. Check collection times and see if you want to beat them to provide your town with the sun you know what bags are acceptable—usually those made from paper or biodegradable plastic such as BioBag Litter. Cost varies \$5-\$9 (litter bags). That way you won't have to worry about neighborhood complaints that your leaves have blown all over their frosty pile.

What can I do to warm up an all-white bath?

Tanya Nayak, senior interior designer in Fresno, has a number of tools for warming down white baths. Here are some of the ways she makes the temperature rise:

CHOOSE A SOFT WHITE for walls and trim. Arctic shades can be well-dressed. Pick a white with a creamy yellow or lots more contemporary look in the tone of traffic gray.

ADD VIBRANT, BOLD, OR COOPER fixtures. White chrome and brass nickel against white creates clinical, linear metallics look luxurious while paired with a sleek, refined off-white. For a unified look, aim for a single finish for fittings and light fixtures.

ADD DIMENSIONS by layering different shapes and materials. If the tile and vanity tops are glossy, set them off with a matte finish faucet and hardware. Let a polished brass accents stand out, as metal always will. Mixed metals and other natural materials—green something as simple as a woven basket or patterned plant—will add texture and along with it, warmth. —KATIE NAYAK

A smart tip for smart thermostats

The best thermostats can take orders from smartphones, tablets, or laptops, applying heat or cooling to your home when you're away or coming back up before you get out of the car. But unlike most programmable thermostats, which rely on a fixed power, these systems require a steady flow of electricity—like a hard-wired wiring. So before you buy one, pop off the cover on your existing thermostat and look for two wires with letters. If there is a wire connected to terminal C, you're in luck. The "constant" wire connects to a 24-volt transformer on your heat and cool equipment, and can supply a constant amount of wall power. If there is no C wire, call in the HVAC technician to do the job. Without a C wire, connection won't work. Smart thermostats will try to bypass the HVAC system and cool the room by circulating air and fans, and reducing the equipment's life spans. —ROBERT WILSON



PHOTO: ANDREW KELLY FOR THE KITTY CAT STUDIO

TCM plumbing and heating expert Robert Threlkelly advises to remember how to keep the system running: an easy DIY job that requires no tools.

Before tackling that kitchen

The right choices—and smart planning—can make the difference between a dream reno and remodeler's regret. Here to help are a half-dozen tips gleaned from TCM staffers who have learned their kitchen know-how the hard way:

1 **Your layout** may look great on paper, but do a reality check by using painter's tape to map out the cabinets, app fixtures and any island or peninsula. Once it's set, don't forget to measure and mark the center of each cabinet and island.

3 When deciding where to put the dishwasher, consider your dominant hand. If you're scraping plates with your right hand, you may find it more ergonomic to install the dishwasher to the left of the sink—less twisting. Store dishware in locations that make unloading one easy motion, too.

4 Install electrical-outlet strips under upper cabinets instead of cluttering the backsplash with outlets. The discreet strips can handle every plug you've got, while leaving a stainless steel faceplate to install tile or stone.

5 In a large kitchen, plan for two trash and recycling pullouts—one in the island so you can toss scraps right into the garbage during meal prep, and the second in a high-traffic spot the whole family can access. Fewer trips to take out the trash makes everyone happy.

6 Before you fall in love with some massive island or free-standing range, make sure it will fit around every corner and through every opening between track delivery and storage. Measure twice. Then get the showroom to sign off on the product's specs. Just in case.

—MICHAEL



THE SLEEK POWER STRIP BY DODGE & LEVISON (TOP) LETS YOU CHARGE YOUR DEVICES ALMOST ANYWHERE, WITHOUT HAVING TO PLUG IN.

Turn an outlet into a USB charger

If your phone, tablet, and laptop chargers have a way of disappearing around the house (and disappearing), consider building a USB port or several. The easiest way would involve preserving a lone electrical socket to wrap it in a cover plate with a built-in USB port on the side, like the SnapPower USB Charger (\$30, snappower.com). No mounting is required. The device connects directly to the circuit from the receptacle's plug.

OptaPlug (\$6, only slightly more complicated), is to replace a standard receptacle with one that has built-in charging ports. Use Leviton's \$79.99 USB charger receptacle (\$30, leviton.com). It's a 150W outlet so long as you are three watts, if

you may need to call in an electrician. With a \$100 outlet receptacle you may get a quick charge two MI (portions) with an amperage, which ranges from 3 to 6.2. The higher the rating, the faster the charge. There's no risk of overcharge being fired, however, as there's a built-in timer that cuts off when plugged in to the outlet.

Note that if you're firmly hanging stations in the kitchen, you'll need to install a outlet upgrade on a GFCI. And if your house is built before 1940, check the depth of the receptacle before buying a corded line (150W port receptacle). It won't fit in a notch less than 1.5 inches deep. But in that case, a USB cover plate should work just fine. —KATIE

Stick-on style

If you've got a space that needs a quick makeover, there's a growing array of innovative wall and window treatments that offer major visual impact in minimal time—so commitment needed.



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▲ ADD A RUSTIC TOUCH

Want to put out the barn wood look without sawing and hammering? These thin cleated barn wood "planks" stick to the wall—or, more precisely, to repositionable Velcro-like strips—for easy installation and relocation. From \$9.95 per square foot. [arrowswall.com](#)



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With patterns that can mimic etched glass, this window film achieves privacy and lets in light while displaying the view—from indoors or out. From \$24 per square foot. [stickprivacy.com](#)



Yes, you should test for radon—again

Remember radon? This invisible, odorless, poisonous gas may no longer be the headlines, but it hasn't gone away. As a product of naturally occurring uranium in soil rocks and groundwater, it can be found at unsafe levels in nearly 1 of every 15 homes, according to EPA. "It's a radon-free zone, and it causes lung cancer," says Bill Long, director of the agency's Center on Radon and Air Toxics. And while most people don't test themselves, they're buying or selling a home, "we recommend testing every couple of years, and after a major renovation." Long says, "In my ducts, I keep vented Radon-Ready fireplaces—anything that decreases the air pressure inside a house relative to the outside—have the potential to pull radon from the土壤 around the foundation, and cause an unsafe buildup of the gas."

Designers have identified radon hot spots, but any location anywhere can have a radon problem, new or old, well-sealed or drafty, with or without a basement. When radon levels exceed 4 picocuries per liter, a certifier can install a system to抽吸 the gas safely out of the house. Some test kits take quick snapshots; others offer an overnight service. Some home radon detection cameras continuously read moisture, humidity, and temperature as well.

EPA suggests installing these devices in the lowest lived-in level of a home. But skip kitchen-cabinet bars, due to their adhesive items. —ELIZABETH BALEYNS



The Radon-Ready fireplaces (left) and (right) reduce the risk of radon entering your home.

RADON INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 82



HOW DO YOU This Old House?

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INSTAGRAM



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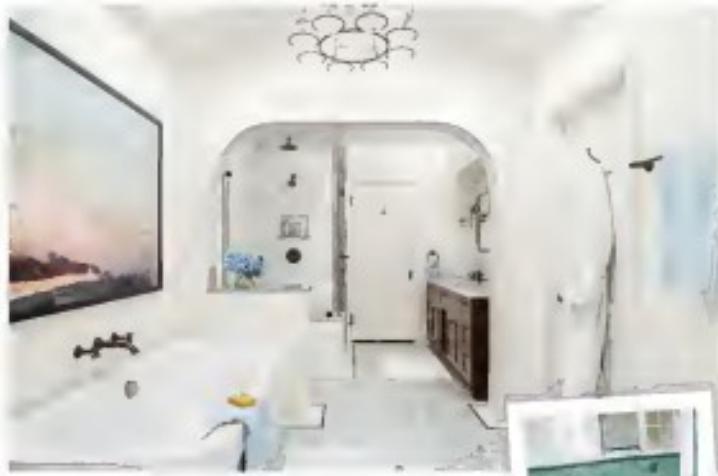


MOBILE APP

Double the pleasure

Snagging square footage from an adjacent porch makes for a spa-like retreat that's flooded with light and nearly twice its original size. **BY NINA BALKIN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LOHMAN**

BY NINA BRAKKE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK LOPHMAN



HEING TIGHT TO GET the outside air is perhaps the most miserable aspect of living in a warm, watery cluster. So, engineers Michael Ley and Mike Marquart were to redesign the equally eastern walls to their 1938 Spanish Revival house in Whitley Heights, CA, they wanted known on giving up the sunken screened-in porch. "We needed a larger bathroom—two people simply couldn't manage it at ease—but we didn't want to sacrifice having a private outdoor area," says Ley.

Opening up a sunroom will mean adding new posts and a heavier beam; the sheathing created in the opening returns a feature found throughout the house. A common sunroom with two rooms was sealed as an enclosed porch just inside the entrance to the rooms, while the length of the former porch was given to the rink, allowing the family a view out the balcony French doors onto the backyard. Classic white subway tiles, oak baseboard, and limestone trim add more traditional feel. Mike and Melissa feel like they just the best of both worlds. "The house is so functional and money, yet we never feel separated from each other," Melissa says. "And our family and friends act as if we're history."

B4E9F0: The ex-royal green tiles and built-in fluorescent light fixture, but the decorated built-in unit may be light-colored.

AFTER: With almost double the square footage, the room is now bright and airy, with a spacious open floor plan, a shower, and a walk-in closet.

Tub: Duravit; Fixtures and Fittings: Alapeart; Shower: Lefebvre; Silestone: Electro



The U-foam-499g custom-foam variety in memory-foam orthopedic and bar care can not change the body's orientation with open shoulder posture for strength. Hinged elbow brace can reduce shoulder pain when the head is held straight. The elbow brace supports the shape of the arm when the shoulder is held straight and fixed.

before

The screened porch offered plenty of room to expand the 70-square-foot bath.



After

An arched opening connects the two halves of the new 1,111-square-foot bath whale French doors across a tiny 8-by-3½-foot balcony.



① Rebuilt the
wall between the
existing bath
and the porch
incorporating an
existing arch.
Rebuilt to
connect the two
parts of the
expanded house.

- Relocation fee
“back end loader”
and/or related
allowance for a
possible move
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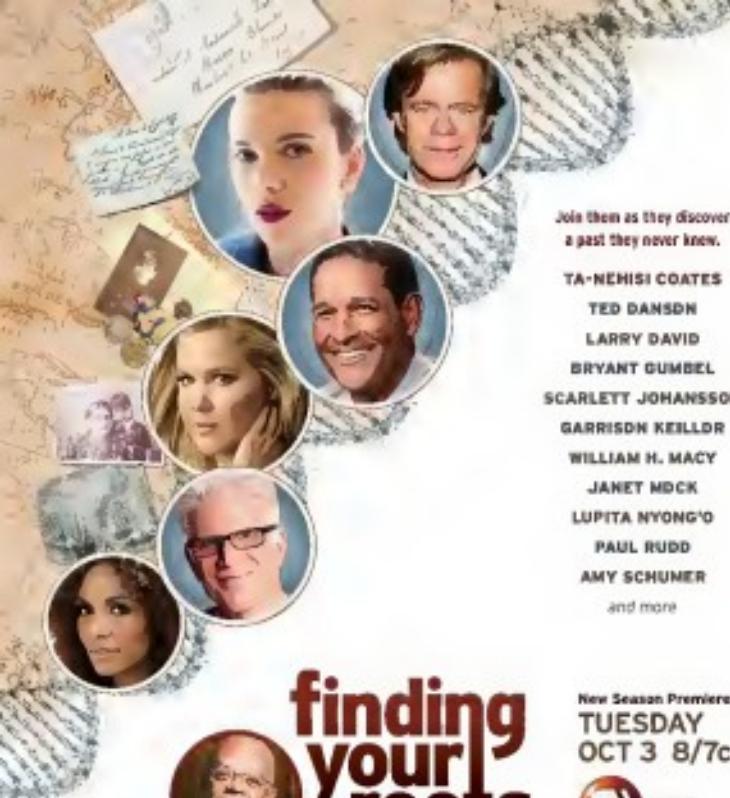
3 Used part of
the parchment
building recently
discovered in a
French church.

4 Installed
6 foot hub along
the length of the
former perch
opposite a
packet door to
the court.

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* before + after | kitchen





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Archaeology

New spot, new style

Switching locations with the family room, a rebuilt kitchen gets the free-flowing space and updated finishes its OFFICES CLOSET BY MEL GOODMAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLEN MCNERHOTY



THE 1950S TU BORI was lovely save for one thing. The warmth of rooms just didn't work for a couple with three young children. Having moved from a Minneapolis apartment, Jeanne Donner found over time in the Summit, NJ, house below saying, "I fell in love with the charm of the house and the beautiful yard," she says. "But the kitchen was like a closet, we never used the back door, and you couldn't see the landscape."

Working with a crew-of-one that included architect Madeline Chiarolla, interior designer Magda Chiarolla, and kitchen designer Heidi Paus, the Dianes reworked the core of the first floor. In the end, they swapped the locations of the kitchen and family room, raised the finished level three inches into a wet

box, and exchanged in home offices for a brother's poetry, adding a half-in-deck note that has. The result is a more lyrical play with cooking, serving, and gathering areas—plus a smaller, more informal look that will suit the traditional house. "The off-white oak paneling emphasizes both contrast and interrelated contemporaneity," says Farnas. "The chairs are traditional; the recesses such as the painted wood with curved legs."

Hiring to cleanup in the basement during almost six months of construction and rely on ad hoc lunches complete with hot place was all worth it, says Jamie. "Now we spent 97 percent of our time in the occupied spaces, and we can see that beautiful space all the time."

1957/1960 The station then was turned into the Garrity name. Its L-shaped layout was revamped for a family of five, and its honey-colored oak looks older than their style.

AFTER In the new kitchen, rebuilt to fit family room space, rift-sawn white oak cabinets and a matching island create a contemporary traditional look. A west bay window where the **BEFORE** was hidden. Colonial Picturesque Collection Buff Oak White countertops. Casuarina Hardwood. Catalina wood.

The new window-lined breakfast nook opens up family views. It's the main eating space for the family (from left: Kevin Damato; Riley; new LG Queen-size II Zume Sheets; Todd Baker; new 4' iMacs; Kohler Sink; Pentalam Kitchenware).

Architectural details were added to the nook area to make it look like a formal dining room. A built-in bench provides a spot to sit and eat.



before

A U-shaped cooking area was isolated at the back of the house and was separated from the eating area.



after

After swapping spots with the family room, the kitchen got a more open and functional layout.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. HARRIS



The sleek lines of the stainless-steel range hood are enhanced by the white quartz countertop and backsplash. Deep drawers provide storage for pots and pans; the narrow ones are perfect for their oft-used oak bread and perfectly Niagara Range loaf. *Rough bread, want it mad!*



FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE OUR PRODUCT GUIDE PAGE 102.



The coffee station is remodeled and updated to the sleek look. New wood cabinets enhance the warm tones that already exist in the house's existing neutral palette.

The old boxy peninsula is replaced with a sleek rectangular peninsula featuring a wood-look door. The built-in desk offers a work surface for meal planning or homework. Courtesy of HomeStyling.com



Cabinet doors on the range and feature cabinet are finished in glass, encased back board is easier to clean than painted ones. The rift-sawn ends are bevelled and stained to give them a smooth, polished look.

Reinventing a style misfit

A 1970s split-level gets a curb-appeal boost from an inviting entry porch, new siding, and updated windows and trimwork.

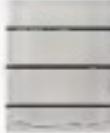
BY KATE WOOD • ILLUSTRATION BY BRANGATE INC.



STYLES CHANGE: "Our basic Tudor split-level just should never have been a style," says Dana Caples, referring to the 1971 house she shares with her husband and son in Allentown, PA. So we asked local architects David R. Drisko and Christine DeOlivereira Cor of WJA Design Group to reinvent its upper mezzanine; the duo would brighten the second-story entry by adding a porch with open railwork in the gable end, along with a French door, sidelights, and a transom. The existing eable and gable porch's for a look that's updated yet classic. Large double-hungs above a wide trim board open up and airy the facade. Gap clapboard-style siding, with the striped brick lower level's brick painted a darker shade, suits the new charcoal gray roof. "I like it!" says Dana. "The new porch really adds balance." ■

finishing touches

Quality details refresh the house and contribute to the classic, modern design.



siding
Horizontal fiber cement shingles have a traditional cedar look, \$69 per sq ft, HeathPark CedarMill LLC Building Supply, HeathPark.com



pendant
Alabaster-style porch light in a cast brass finish, \$100, Home Depot, HomeDepot.com



windows
New vinyl double-hungs with grilles make the low-slung house feel taller, Marvin Clad Double Hung Window, from \$4,72 per square foot, MarvinWindows.com



porches
Stain-washable covers fit snuggly onto the entry porch, Boca Shells, Indian Mounds, Veranda Pattern, \$10 each, BocaShells.com

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Rough up a wall

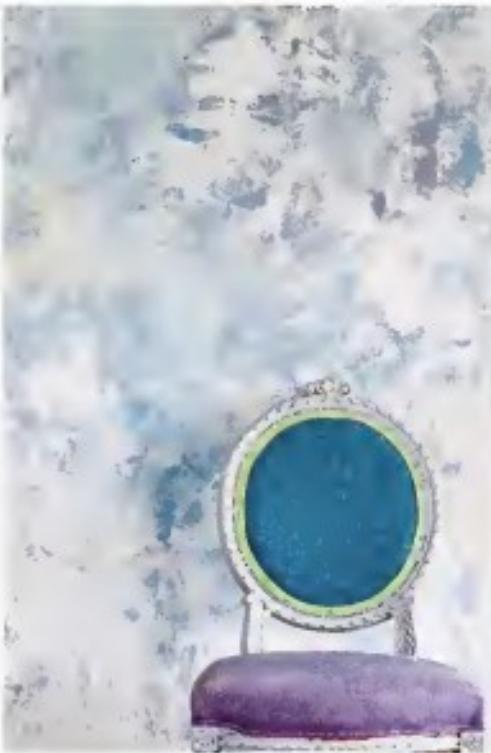
Slather on colors drawn from nature, then smooth out the edges—no brush, no roller, just special effects

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTOPHER DRAKE

IF THIS GOAL of mine achieves paint jobs in a year, uninterrupted by the need of bumps and brush strokes, the idea here is something else again. Like an *Afrocentric* Expressionist painting, this wall has movement and visual texture. "The idea was inspired by old-chateau walls with layers of paint and plaster, and by hand-painted walls and Venetian plasters," says Anne Sloan, the British decorative painter and entrepreneur who details this project in her most recent book, *Annie Sloan Paints Everything* (CHC Books).

The No. 1 trick involves a humble tool. Call it cardboard meets canvas. "Cardboard is soft and doesn't make scratch marks, yet is stiff enough to hold," Sloan says. It does absorb paint, however, which means you need to sweep in a fresh pass every 5 to 10 minutes—an easy way to repurpose that pile of boxes from *Rezumat*.

All cold, it's a satisfying, clever endeavor, whether the end result covers a grungy basement room or a dramatic accent wall. The imp-by-way, opposite, shows how:



The paints used to achieve the look at right: **Annie Sloan Chalk Paint** in **anno-vintage Old Dutch Green and Old White** (both $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) with **brushes made from Duck Egg Blue, Louis Blue, Old White, and Teigney Green**.

STEP-BY-STEP



1] Pour roughly equal amounts
of the two blues into a separate palette using a flat surface to keep the base coat as completely dry.



2] Werk the two blues together
using a piece of 12×12 -inch cardstock with a scraping motion to blend the paint.



3] Move to the wall and use the corrugated to create the layered effect of color by softly scraping and varying pressure as you move along, shaping the cardstock using one or two hands. Let the original base-color show through in spots.



4] Add a few accents (load some white paint with lots of the two blues that remain on the mat) and use the cardboard to apply it here and there.



5] Create a blue-gray by adding white with smaller amounts of the two blues and a lot of the teige, apply as in Step 3. Do a final pass with white, allowing glimpses of the colors underneath to show through. Allow to dry and then use a soft cloth to clean off any excess.



6] Smooth the texture. Use sandpaper to take care of any hard edges, then add shear with a hot iron and seal the wall with a layer of wax. If you wish, feather the finished wall with a sharpie for white place in front of it, and keep the rest of the decor clean and simple. ■